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Dr. Homer E. Newell
Associate Administrator for Space
Science and Applications
National Aeronautics and
Space Administration
Code SL
Washington, D. C. 20546

Dear Dr. Newell:

Dr. Kuiper's comments on the Soviet space program were of great interest and I appreciate your sending them to me.

The comments on the origin of the space race were very interesting, and for all we know, may very well be true. There is no evidence to support or deny the contention that the U.S. message caused the Soviets to move on a crash basis. There is, however, no question that the Soviets had been experimenting for some time with rockets at Kapustin Yar. They were also involved in the construction of facilities at Tyuratam for the continuation of these experiments on a larger scale. There is some evidence that Sputnik I and possibly even Sputnik II used boosters other than the SS-6 and very likely were an outgrowth of the earlier programs. Whether or not this was the initial motive, the program then proceeded to an orderly, well planned operation.

We have no information which contradicts the theory that the Venus IV capsule failed before reaching the surface.

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In conclusion, we are inclined to believe Venus IV failed, on the way down, at almost 30 miles altitude, but we cannot prove it. We would like very much to hear from you about what Dr. Kuiper learns at the meeting in Kiev this October.

The history of the Soviet space program certainly bears out the observations about Korolev's leanings toward technological achievements. The Soviet space program has been weak in science from the very beginning both in emphasis and execution. Soviet achievements which at first generated much publicity (such as the Lunik 3 pictures) have often in the long run proven to be of little or no scientific value. Dr. Kuiper's comment on the effect of the Korolev death on the Soviet space program was interesting. Some of my people feel that his death may in some way be related to the recent series of failures experienced by the program. A study is currently underway along these lines.

Please let me repeat my sincere appreciation of your efforts and take this opportunity to encourage future correspondence of this type.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED]

Carl E. Duckett
Deputy Director
for
Science and Technology

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